Mondo Bizzarro

Andreas Gripp

Mondo Bizzarro

-poems-

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Mondo Bizzarro
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Acknowledgements

Half of the poems in this collection were written in October and November of 2024, while the following, which have had either minor or major revisions during this same period and have appeared in previous books of mine, were scribed a little earlier:

Monday, 7am (September 2024)
Magic (September 2024)
APE (September 2024)
"google it" (August 2024)
Not Even If I Was the Last Poet on Earth (August 2024)
"me too" (2023)
Wild Bill McKeen (2023)
Upon Hearing My Haiku Is Pointless (2023)
The Mona Fucking Lisa (2023)
Ratios (2023)

Love Poem for a Woman and *Juxtapositions* were both part of a single, longer poem written in 2023.

Academia is an older poem screaming to belong in this collection. Ditto for *The Colour of Jazz* and an updated version of *Covenants*, now called *Les Communistes.*

Detroit is for D.A. Lockhart.
Love Poem for a Woman is for Carrie.

She had called in the debt that parents owe a child for bringing her, unasked, into a strange world. One should never make an offer without knowing full well what will happen if it is accepted.

—David Brin

C-FZXP

Arizona,
or Archie's Second Heat Stroke

It gets hot here
down in Tucson.
But it *isn't* wise
to start a poem
with a blatant under-
statement.

I simply *sweat*
my aberrations
from my pores, shower
thrice a day,

finish the night
with a drumstick made of
cream, ice,
a cone and sticky
wrapper.

But I will leave
the metaphors
to you, one who knows
a snare drum when you
hear it, knows the
melt is overrated,

that Dali found his
stopwatch
in the desert,
just outside of
Phoenix,
took the lauds and credit
for another's
bright idea.

You've been
in the sun too
long, your face
a cooked *tomahto*—

or maybe a
scarlet pepper
left behind by
Peter Piper,
ghosted
at the nearest
Taco Bell.

There's nothing
to see or hear—

even the crickets
spend the night
in their siesta,
while Ramble-Joe
is crooning
in the lot of
the honky-tonk,
during *Bubba's*
Open Mic,
the one for which
you scrawled your
signature,
singing *Diamonds*
Are a Girl's
Best Friend,
right after
being bitten
by a snake,

then mistaking
Marilyn Manson
for *Tiny Tim,* tip-toeing
through the cacti,
hitting *notes*
with your falsetto,

then something about
a chicken in the air—
or a *bat's* head
bitten off—no, that's *Ozzy,*
from the *Blizzard of Ozz,*
which has nothing at all
to do with any *road* of
yellow brick—damn
that's *Elton John,*
so sorry to interrupt—

now, where were we?
Oh yeah, then licking
every needle
till your tongue was
crudely pierced into
a place it couldn't leave,

like a child on a railing
when it's thirty-five *below,*
yielding to a dare,
the laughter from those
around him
birthing puffs of smoky
air, as if a steam train going
nowhere in a hurry.

Meditation

The trickle of a
stream's serenity,
the pan flute's
halcyon lull,

reveals to me
it's Zen
(which is acceptable
now in Scrabble,
though that isn't the
point of this story).

These sounds are
warmly emanating
from one of those dime-
a-dozen CDs,
the kind you find
at a dollar store,

which help you to
relax,
loosen your every
limb
like a limp elastic.

I *have* the open
window in the
summer,

the cardinals
and the blue jays
joining to *suggest*
I stay in bed,

forego another
chill pill
in the din of
afternoon,

but I miss them all
when it snows,
become grateful
for a disc
revealing *spectrums*—
in just the
right light,
at just the
perfect angle,

the one in which
the chickadees
have joined
the Sangha's chorus,
the Tibetan
singing bell,

even in the
pall
of a murky
winter,

virtuosic *birds*
which are twittering:

from the boughs
of a cut-
down tree, felled
since the distant *copy-*
right of 1993,

their lifespans having
ended
before this thing was
even *shrink-wrapped,*

that it's all a
piss-poor *substitute,*
for a living, breathing
flock, that Enya would
sound like Anthrax
if *juxtaposed,* against
this insipid meander,

which would even make
an *elevator* salesman
cringe,

and I really don't
wanna sleep my
entire *Saturday* away,
whittle my way at
the ponder of
useless koans,

and not only *that,*

it's yet another
painful example of
how death and its sluggish
rot can have the gall
to sound so *soothing*—
so goddamn, fucking
soothing.

“Lost in the Mail”

You say your *invitation*
must be lost
in a bag of mail.

No one issues invites
via postage
anymore.

Like, 1982 called.

Though I admit
to being the victim,
of a misplaced
presence request—

to a drunken
poets’ soirée,
an event which every
bard had been aspiring
to attend,

knowing *Alicia,*
who I’d crushed on
like a runt
from a brood of whelps,
with a moppet
in its mouth
that’s full of drool,

(which reads much better, IMO,
than a tired “puppy love”),
might strip to the toes
and sing,

a ditty
from Donny Osmond,
penned in 1960
for Annette—Paul
Anka’s mousy muse.

But it’s clear
that I’ve digressed,
that the song was “Return
to Sender”—
address
unknown,

that Elvis never
heard of cards
that slipped through a
mailman’s grasp,

fallen to the grass
beside a hydrant,

defaced by an antsy
pooch who simply
had no place to go,

all the other canines
round the block—gathered
with their humans
in the park beside the
school, the cake and popped
balloons, the envelopes
embossed—crumpled
then discarded to the
ground,

so terribly out-of-date,
though neither rain nor
sleet nor snow
have ever hindered
their arrival.

Two for the Price of One

ONE

This *isn't* yet another
suicide,
refrains of self-
demise,

but rather the
ecstasy
of knowing that it
ends, the instant *life*
tastes of roses
on your tongue,

the bleeding
of your palms
from clutching
stems, the pulse
of red descent
that slakes the roots
you wouldn't wrest,

not even with your
cat severely
scratched,

knowing that it *wasn't*
from an outstretched
duel of claws,

or the message
from the florist
that said *we're closed,*
that your mother
would have to simply
do without,

her casket
like the table
in the kitchen—even on her
Birthday/Christmas
Day,

the vacancy of
vase and spotless
plate,

cutlery for *two*
serving *half* of its
intent,

except for the
second knife/serrated
blade,

going the extra
mile, its teeth upon
your wrist and crusty
bread,

giving to you
what the vineyard
never could:

Do this in
remembrance
of me.

TWO

This isn't
yet another
banal ballad, of
pitied, own-infliction—

it's of *wine,* is it
not?
Its marriage
of loaf & crimson,

its Friday *happy*
hour,

its stain from
3pm
that shrieks you're
saved.

At First Sight

It's just
infatuation,
the stirring of
pheromones,

like a potion
of witch's *brew*
on Hallows Eve,

a frog's eye
here, a snake's tongue
there,

animalistic
chemistry
with its drive to
procreate,
spawn a billion
yous in order to
fill up empty space.

And do you think
that you're the first?
That *no one else*
has felt like this
before?

Look again—
there are chimeras
all around us:

the song of
flock and feather,
wrens that flit in
tender *unison,*

the child
with her face
upon the glass,
the seduction
of the pupils
from a Persian,
its endless tufts
of fur,

and there—
between the twinkling
blink of eyes,
a zig-zag
so *electric*
from the sky,

carving its initials
into the bark of
a swelling tree,

marking as *forever*
what likely lasts a *year;*

light so swift
and searing
you believe that it's
in love.

Colours

The bandage on my
scratch
doesn't meet with
your approval.

It's a darker
hue of brown, not the
Caucasian
tint and tone
I should have purchased.

None of them
match me anyway,
I reply in my defense,
ducking the call of
racist appropriation.
It was the only one left
on the shelf,

at the neighbourhood
pharmacy.

You can *never* truly hide
an awkward wound;

there *isn't* a single
instance where a
band-aid perfectly
blends into our skin—
whether a jazzman
down in Harlem
or the descendant
of Sitting Bull;

and this *only* serves
to anger you the more—

where's your ASIAN
stereotype, the woman
in her kimono?
Is she dining
with the Pakistani
Sage?

I tell you instead
of *Klaus,* the skier
from the alps
of *Germany,*
hitting his head on a tree,
while speeding down the slope
of the *Matterhorn,*

how the Swiss
and the Italians
could never *agree*
which one to use—
white, off-white, very white;

that you
could always *see it* in the snow,
no matter how blinding the sun,
regardless how blue
the sky might look
on *any* particular day,
knowing the *point*
of this senseless piece

is *not* the degree of melanin
that each of us might have,
but the *slicing*
of fragile skin,
its deep and
sudden fissure,
the blood that rises
up amid the cut,

that the only
attested colour
that comes to mind
is held at bay,

a red the shade
of scarlet
when it finally meets
the air,

leaving its
crimson *tinge*
an inch behind,

smothered by the
politically
incorrect—

or no,
that should read as
anatomically,

the study of cells
and vessels,
of flesh and why it's
covered,

that there isn't
a spot on the spectrum
on which we'll utter
hey that's me!

Monday, 7am

You greet me with
Morning, never
Good Morning—
like you did when
hearts were younger.

Morning
rises from a
horizon, like an inmate
from a metal bed,
nothing to cushion
his nightmares—
sentenced to relive a *life*
that isn't a life—
the cursing, the welts,
the bruises;
the slop passed off
as food;

the absence of
privacy,
when one needs it the
very most,
gone with the
gurgle of a flush.

Good Morning
is harkened by
glows, the lilt
from a lark
at dawn,
the gradual
lift of the light,
each moment
far brighter
than the last.

Morning is stating
the obvious, the drudge of a
turtle-drive,
the blaring of
horns at red,
a finger in the *air*
from the car
that will pass you
on the right.

It's the demand
from your boss
to get cracking,
the indigestion
from the eggs, expired,

the coffee from *McDonald's*
too acidic,
the leaving of
your kitchen
without a kiss.

Good Morning
is the merge
of fervent lips,
the ecstasy
of a lingering
hug, a taste
from the dreams
before,

the confession
of a love
that never wearies,
never reaches
for a cup

until the curtains
have been opened
and you stand
in gaping awe
at what's to come.

Magic

The final line of this
poem no longer
exists. It was surely there
for the taking, its fingernails
clutching rock, at the
top of a ragged *cliff*
from which it hung,
a *Wile E. Coyote*
in the making.

This poem's closing line
is a bar of *soap*
in a steamy shower,
pushed *away* from my
hand by its slime,
ready to trip me *up*
the moment it falls,
my eyes shut tightly
from the suds of cheap
shampoo, its lie of
no more tears.

The final line of this
poem is a cheeky *kid*
playing hide-and-seek,

concealed behind the
curtains, waiting for me
to open—

then disappear
like David Blaine.

Dear darling of a
brat, I promise not to
harm, will only *borrow*
what I need to make this
grand, let you vanish
in the air

once I've wrenched you
from my hat
by your fluffy ears.

APE

I always
pull my punches
playing Scrabble—

just this after-
noon, for instance,
with a potential
triple-word,
my holding back an
R
that spelled out
RAPE,
like what you went
through years ago,

my laying down
instead
a tail-less primate,
beating his savage
chest, seizing by force
the female
of his choosing,

then again, *no*—

to *imitate,*
to *mimic* the tenant
below us
doing laundry,
her bulging, puffy
cheeks
much like a
chipmunk's;

the one who's
scrubbing the crimson
from her nightgown,
while we're busy
with our chuckles,

who scrubs and scrubs
and scrubs
when no one's looking.

“google it”

When you asked me for
the best Italian bistro
in this city, I answered
google it.

That day on the beach,
as you peered into the
murk of knee-deep
water, you questioned if it
was *safe* to take a swim,
and I responded *google*
it.

Dalini's had a slew of
great reviews—its ambience,
its al dente and
pinot noir, its well-earned
Michelin stars;

while the lake
had tested positive
for bacteria, the kind
that makes you sick,
and I was relieved to
stop our plunge
in a matter of moments,

singing the praise
of the county's
daily testing
regimen.

I reply to your
every question
with *google it.*
There is nearly nothing
that the search
cannot answer—
and yes, I imagine
you think me *lazy,*
terse, that my lexicon
is void
of romantic words.

But when you ask me
if I love you
I say *google*
the centipede,
how it never
runs out of
legs,

google the single
polar bear on ice,
never bearing
to leave it
until the final
floe has melted,

and please *google* the man
in Uzbekistan,
becoming a widower
at 21,

never remarried,
never missed a daily
graveside visit,
and when he turned
one hundred and one,
worried the world
would run out of flowers
before his final, doleful
kiss upon her name.

Detroit

Day-twah
is how you pronounced
it, my ostentatious friend,
as though the French
were still infesting
where the river
worms and bends;

as if both *Antoine*
and *Alphonse*
had a share in
Motown Records;
Soul Train
spinning a sultry
Édith Piaf;

a fleur-de-lis
the crest of *Hockey-*
town, with neither wheel
nor red-dipped wing
discernible;

the Tigers
plugging *croissants*—
for the stretch
in the bottom seventh.

And then there's Sir Graves
Ghastly, sporting a
Parisian beret, out of his
screaky coffin,
desperately needing a tin of
WD-40, purchased
across the river, *half*
of the instructions
en Français—to the chagrin
of every *Windsorite*
around.

My dear, flamboyant
fellow, the French
were *never* the first—
it simply sounds
romantic
to the non-
Indigenous folk,

for the lovers of a
Hunter's Moon,
painting the sky
aglow,
like a drunken
Delacroix,

strolling within
the shadows
of Art Deco's
Fisher Building,
as if beneath
the Eiffel Tower,

ambling hand-in-hand,

toward the man
selling franks
on petite baguettes,
a smell of ripened
Brie that wafts
around him.

The Man in the Purple Boat

The man in the purple boat
has *yet* to unfurl his sails.
We see him every morning, dock-
side on a chair, at the
marina across the road,
talking to all the anglers
about "the big one"—

which *never* got
away, though his lonely
bit of evidence
is a sunshine-faded
Polaroid
from nineteen
seventy-six.

We surmise
the man's a fraud, hobbling along
the deck when folks are
watching, clearing his throat
in need of a *Fisherman's*
Friend, that his pocket
sprouts its vessel and diagonal
stripes;

that the faithful cap he wears
is just a Dollarama knockoff,
of bloody Captain
High Liner,
believing the *closest*
he gets to a catch are simply
breaded sticks of Haddock—
baking at 425.

I *bet* that
he gets seasick
from the sprinklers
on the lawn, just *beyond*
the perimeter gates,
their bars of vertical
black that keep us inter-
lopers away,

rarely *near*
to ask him for a ride,
seldom within his earshot
of our snickers,
assuming he's *never*
been seen in shorts
because we'd know
he doesn't limp
from a wooden
peg;

that what dangles
in his mouth
is just a *Popeye*
Cigarette,

astonished
that he doesn't
sport a parrot
on his shoulder—
from *Gotta Getta Gund;*

our ignorance
of the fact
his purple boat
had a maiden
voyage,
before its protracted
mooring:

a loveseat
behind the wheel,

a woman's scripted
name along the hull

(long-since painted *over*
with a coat from Sherwin-
Williams);

that he could validly
wear a patch
beside his nose, replacing
the glassy *eye* he somehow lost
in the deep of the
lake, flailing his arms and
legs while trying
frantically to save her.

“me too”

When I tell you *I love you*
you answer "me too"

and perhaps I misconstrue,
that you love *yourself*
like the affirmations
advise,

the ones we see on Instagram,
that Rupi Kaur is full of them,
churning them out like some poet
in a fast-food window,

where you pick up a side of
"you're better off without him"
plus some platitude on the rain
to wash it down;

or maybe "me too" is a memory,
in the (not so) recent past:

an abusive ex, a diddling dad,
the gymnastics coach who always
held you snug, checked out your
ass instead of your landing,
after vaulting and parallel bars;

but then I've always read too
much into your words,
thinking there's some *story*
below the surface,

a recollection
that encircles like a shark,
that you're afloat
in a punctured dinghy
awaiting rescue,

by an aqua knight who rides
the seven seas, one who sees
a kraken where there's not,

thinks "right back at you,"
"ditto kiddo"

is the beast from a thousand
fathoms he's come hastily
to slay.

Wild Bill McKeen

This village
through which we're
driving is home
to "Wild Bill McKeen"

and though we haven't
a clue who he is—
or was—
his name is on
a banner in the air,
tied to a pair of
streetlights
to make certain
we'll never miss it.

The posted limit
of speed is only
30, and there's
not a lot to look at
so we defer to
our conjectures
as we crawl—

surmise
he's a hockey
player,

spent his time
in the *penalty* box,
a master of slash
and slew foot,
told the refs to
go fuck off,
took a piss
on the Lady Byng.

We then travel
back in time,
think he may have
robbed a coach, rustled cattle,
outdrew the county
sheriff after starting
a barroom brawl.

We think of synonyms
for *wild,*
saying his hair was
endless, unruly,
he'd grown a beard
from chin to foot,
grunted like an ape,
clutching a raw steak
with savage hands—
tearing off the
pieces with his teeth.

In minutes
we're back
in the country, racing
past the farms
and grazing horses,
say his rep
was overblown,

mere hyperbole,

from the folks
who've led some
pretty boring lives,

that Wild Bill McKeen
took his steaming
cup of coffee
without cream,

once jaywalked
across the road
while it was raining,

returning a *book*
overdue
by a day,

never guessing
he'd be immortal
on a sign,

or better yet—
in a poem,

by someone too lazy
to google
his claim to fame.

The Tightwad

Dollar King
is probably not
the most idyllic place
to pick up flowers,
especially when they're
fake.

She'll call you *cheap,* deride
your half-assed effort—
to find an *anniversary*
bouquet; clearly during the gasp
of the final minute.

It's to *efflorescence*
what *Alpha-getti* is—
to a romantic, Italian
dinner—though yes,
you can arrange *I Love You*
in its basement-bargain
sauce, put on Pavarotti's
Chittara Romana.

But there's being
a little *frugal*
and then there's
Marley & Scrooge,

your wallet unable to
open,
as if it's been *krazy-*
glued.

It's a roll of
one-ply paper
when *Cottonelle's*
a toonie more;

the socks with
eleven holes
beneath your shabby
shoes from *George;*

it's an expired
box of *Turtles*
when *Laura Secord's*
daisy-fresh—

and I don't mean a
faded fabrication,
but the feel of the *real*
McCoy, its baby's
bottom corolla,

the one you
pluck the petals from
to see if you're truly
loved,
if it carries
to your final
breath,

though I recall
you once remarked

just how *everlasting*
every counterfeit
can be,
handing out a 50
to the beggar
along the way,

his gesture
of *thumbs-up,* smile of
gratitude—
once you departed
the store with a
scentless bundle,
its plastic, greenish
stems,

his conveyance to
you
they'll be in *bloom*
a thousand years
from now,

when our currency
has *died*
and blown away,

when *love* is spelled
with the letters of
a newborn tongue.

Upon Hearing My Haiku Is Pointless

What's the point of

Layers of grey cloud
are leaving the landscape wet
Ducklings in the grass

a literary critic asked me,
saying who cares about ducks
in the grass and why would anyone
read a poem about them
and I emphasized duck*lings*
which are the babies
and people are always drawn to babies
because they're cute and in this case
they're fuzzy and walk in a row
after their mother
and the mother isn't mentioned in the
haiku if you'll notice
and the point might be that they're lost,
maybe orphaned,
that the grey cloud leaving the landscape
was far more vicious than we realize,
casting mother duck *away* in a savage
storm and her babies doing an awkward
waddle in search of her and please tell
me *then* you don't give a shit.

The Mona Fucking Lisa

After a single session,
I already regret my *sign-up*
for this ekphrastic poetry
course, cursing to you
the assignment I was given:

Mona Lisa, the fucking Mona
Lisa, like that hasn't been done
a gazillion times

and yes, I won't be able to fake it,
that everyone and their mailman
knows her visage,
are well-versed in da Vinci's flair,
and their lofty expectations
will be something I can't deliver.

You ask me what our poet friend
was given, the one who always gets the
lucky breaks, and I tell you the
Voice of Fire,
three lines of blue-red-blue,
vertically trite and prosaic,
that no one's ever heard of Barnett
Newman because he sucks,

that I could have scrawled a sonnet
on my kindergarten days,
on a pair of simple colours,

how the Gallery
had been fleeced in ‘89,
caught up in the avant-garde,
how 1.8 million
could have gone to help the homeless,
paid for their chalets
and pedicures, covered
the cost and tip
for their tortellini
Bolognese;

but as it is,
I have to *sleuth* my way
behind that Delphic smile,
invent a tale of Giocondo,
that Leonardo
tried to paint her
minus mirth and maturation,
in 1499,
when his subject began to sob
from pent-up grief, reliving the death
of her baby daughter,

his *Moaning Lisa* a work of art
the Renaissance ignored
(bathing in their beam
of erudition), that even Machiavelli
said *chin up, she needs a grin;*

that when the *time*
arrived to try it all again,
da Vinci made a jest,
a side-splitter, that Lisa barely
smirked at his ill-timed droll,
that he hadn't a clue
how it felt to love and lose,
consumed as he was with
innovation, invention,
his maps and magnum opus,

failing to heed
the red of blood and life,
her blue, blue mood.

Salt

Poetry is exhausting.

I only say it
because the energy to scribble
has fled me like a prophet—
when a city that the
LORD is not too keen on

is being *turned*
to a sodium-pillar—

wait, that's the *wife*
of God's Messenger,
turning to look at the *heap*
of a nuclear winter.

Sodom was incin-
erated: its every man
who dared to be
both *known* and in the *know,*
in the *biblical* sense, of course;

or maybe they were
poets as well—

so stuck within their
lines of tired rhythms—
that if I *don't* put down my pen,
I'll wind *up* like the lot of them—

hair and beard ablaze,
saline to the touch,
forever unable to write
of love and poems.

Antecedents

The only thing that matters
in this story is your gasp—
upon the moment of *aha.*

I could spin an anecdote,
about the *gorilla*
who escaped
from the San Diego Zoo;

how he only thought of him-
self, could've snatched the *keys*
but never did,
saying *see ya later, suckers,*
to the peacocks and the bears,
pounding his chest in pride,
seizing the elusive mantle
of *King of Beasts;*

thumb upon his nose in
cruel derision, four fingers
that were wiggling in
the air, the lion still within
its cramped enclosure,
roaring its disapproval.

But there's little
to remember
in such a tale, it's about as deep
as *Curious George,*
makes *Seuss* akin to
Shelley, *Schulz* a
Shakespeare sonnet.

Yet I could bring a *close*
to this behemoth,
conjure something *tragic,*
how freedom didn't turn
the way he'd hoped,
that children shunned his
teeth and hungry eyes,
the cabbie
refusing to take him
to *Tijuana;*

life, as it always seems to *be*
upon the grass, no better
on the opposite side
of the fence;

that if he ever
dreamed of donning
a *sombrero,*

sipping mojitos
in the sun, he'd surely best forget it,
double-back to his *potrero,*
beg his former handlers
for *leniency,*

or at least a ripe
banana, one without a
bruise, encased in
lemon-yellow,

or perhaps a tangerine,
easier to *divvy* as
amends, his countenance
humbly bowed,

hoping Leo
will give this citrus
another chance, its
orange like the sun
upon its setting,
or perhaps its morning
rise, when it laves
the verdant ground
with *whatever* makes your
pupils open wide—

like a pair of
oil spills;

your breath a sudden
captive of your sheer
astonishment.

The Automaton

I'm asked at once
to confirm the fact
that *I am not a robot*

but I am.

I don't need to
wrestle with a CAPTCHA,
say how *many*
fucking squares
contain the form of
a juggling clown;

and who's to say
he isn't just a *poser;*
dropping the eggs
mere seconds after
this pic was hurriedly
snapped?

If I were *human,*
I wouldn't give a crap
about the man behind the
paint, the stupid scarlet
ball upon his nose,

the wig
that makes him look
ridiculous, an end-times
Phyllis Diller. Would a cold,
metallic carcass
point this out?

But because I'm just a
robot, I think about his
night that lies ahead,
washing all that shit
from his miserable
face, the grin he's never
held past 6pm,
the single bed he
sleeps on—hard
as an iron *door,*
one that keeps him
barred from actually
living, a woman's
wispy touch and
sincere smile;

falling in *love*
like a man of flesh-and-
blood will often do,

if his chest contains a
heart instead of Intel,
the winding green of
veins in lieu of wires,

wondering *why*
he has to prove
he's truly human,
when he's in
the same position
I'm currently in,

that he's been hurt
so very often

they should sense
he's not a *robot*
from the salt of his misty
touch, the quiver
of his finger
on the mouse,

that he needn't
click a box to say
I'm real.

Love Poem for a Woman

You are the one whom God
should have made in the beginning.
A more beautiful name
for each animal;

winding in a way
that only a river
and a *woman* possibly can—
the extended, rippling
tresses,
the arcing of breasts
and hips,

the concaving
small of the back,

the melodic
lilt of the voice,

someone the Lord
would not have said *no* to
regarding what's in-
between the leaves—

a fruit
no tree of knowledge
can ever keep from you
again.

Juxtapositions

I pluck the *olives* from the
salad and that makes it less than
Greek. You ask me if they're green
or black and I state
it makes no difference.

I replace the blocks of feta
and consider *German-Jew.*
It's *been* an oxymoron
since nineteen-thirty-three.
I'll blend some smoky *Rauchkäse*
with an aged *Gvina Levana*—

swap my baseball
cap for a yamaka
in *case* you take offense.

Now bring me beer from Bavaria
and hot latkes from the slum.
I'll gladly prove
what *cannot* go together

is just a *fallacy* of thought:

A frown is a smile
that's standing on its head.

Feet are a pair of hands
which are unwilling to clasp
in prayer.

Toes are very cognisant
that fingers are more graceful—
so they *never* stretch for the sky.

Unable to grant any light of its *own,*
the moon is but a mirror for the sun
in which to worship its own reflection
(and you thought that
Dorian Gray
was the one who's really
vain).

What is *ugly,* anyway?
Is it the absence of beauty
or too much of it all at once?

November the 6th from Essex

The calm of Lake
Erie is eerie,
looking *beyond*
its settled sheen

to Ohio,
where the anthem of
4 shot dead

emboldened
both love and peace,
but it was *never*
really enough.

It is never-ever
enough, when *oligarchy*
makes its way
onto the menu, with a bowl
of a billion
bribes
to start you off.

This was what we
feared, when women
see their wombs
reflect a face—

Donald, Junior, Eric,
or even creepy *Barron*—
his Damien/Omen
persona,

that a *monarch*
won out
in the bitter end,
when democracy
is wrapped
in dollar bills,
when the dumping
of tea
in a harbour

no longer means a thing;

when Charlie the King
would have *been*
a whole lot better;

when orange
is the brand-new
white, just a swan
in the Russian ballet,
a *marionette*
in a psycho-
puppet show.

When we've tallied
up the dead, by the
dawn of '29,
say it was simply
madness, the plethora
of un-vaxxed children,
of Latino girls and boys,
of the one who's *both*
and neither,

that *sailing*
will always come first,
for the "enemies within,"
exactly like
M.S. St. Louis—

turned away with *Jews*
at Cuban shores,

the horizon of
what-was-home

now eyed
on the journey back,

the outline
of the hills that, like
us, rise then fall
and then *fall* once
more, worse than the
very first,

our betters
awaiting the relish
of *lock and load,*

not with swastikas
this time (though yes,
there's always some of
those),

but the red of an
angry nation,
an angrier demi-
god,

not a *crown* this time
but a cap,

MAGA filling the void
of what was worshipped—
YHWH, or the great I AM,

His Son—surely
misconceived,
who'll come back
with a flaming sword—

read it in *Revelation,*
from the pages
of James the First,
nearly one-hundred-
and-eighty years before
the scroll of *We the People,*

which, as it turns out in '24,
means only *some* of us
are people:

the Caucasian
man and woman
buffing the shine
on the hull of their
yacht,

the one they'll gladly take
across the lake,

from the city of
Sandusky,
to be Great
Again and Again,

“whether they like it
and whether they don’t”—

the cost of our
indifference, the shrug of
it is what it is.

Mathematics

It's time I wrote a
poem that makes some
money.

I'm unable to get my
groceries
with a dozen Facebook
likes—

one for every
egg within a carton;

for each *pair*
of toasted slices
from a pack of
Blunder Bread;

for every piece of
fish that's mostly
batter.

Of course, if I
do the proper math,
then pancakes
offer the biggest
bang for a buck—

if I dilute their
gooey mixture
with the water
from my tap,

flip them before
they're ready,
lower the monthly
bill that's gone
electric,

wash them down
with a bottle of
home-made wine,

like the one
my Italian neighbour
used to give me:
bitter on the
tongue but very
potent,
foregoing the maple
syrup—
that's become too pricey
to use;

that flour and sour
grapes
offer a one-two
punch in the morning,

enough to knock me
out before the dawn,
before I *even* get the
chance to scrawl haiku.

Academia

Forgive the mathematics
of my obsolescent mind,
it was a character flaw
that brought me,
deliberately drunk
and callously crashing
your Cambridge convocation.

For I'm denied my Ivy tenure,
padded *chairs* at Brown, Cornell—
where talk of factitious fractals
haughtily hobnobs
with the snobs.

> Jealousy, jealousy,
> I'm sprouting green
> with jealousy!
> Their lectures rise
> as freeway fumes
> and the Earth feels hotter
> by the hour!

Doctor Proctor,
in clearing the perimeters of mites,
there's none to feed on the dust
your brittle bones will leave behind.
Please give me a gallon of water,
acrid grapes need washing down.

If it's cards your hands are clutching
then trade your cloven heart
for a spade.
I'll raise your petty, paltry King
with a double face
and peasant flush.

Grant me chips
to cash on site
and a girl
who thinks I'm cute.

I'll gladly lose my liver
to the cellars
of Vaduz,
some vintage wine
from Liechtenstein,
a nation never noted
on the map.

And should a substitute
suffice,
make it a *keg*
of Russian rum
from all the States
of Rasputin,

who wipe their soles
on Stalin's soul,
swipe their *sickles*
spitefully.

I repudiate
Pravda's penchant
for preserving
propaganda!

With my papers
licked by flames,
you say my thesis
is at an end,
I'll be lacking
archival status,
and *Emeritus*
will still elude me
with every curtsy
to the peers.

My dear Professor Proud,
Holocene isn't Recent,
it's old and out-of-touch,
its fossils
simply sediment
in the sand.

When I declare my revolution,
that the speed of sound's a figment
of the men who nibble figs,
I'm scorned to shame and stain—
my *deriding* of Derrida
the caustic cause
of condescension.

For it's a case of clumsy timing
since you all prefer perfection:

my missing
of the *wobble*
tossing calendars
aside,
3 one-millionths
of a second,
due to quakes
in ocean floors
that rock the Earth,

my counting
all askew,
mea culpa calculations
in Calcutta,

believing they'd be published
in the *Science Michigan,*
by my friend
who sleeps with *both*
the editors,

unaware
of supplantation,
by cartoons
that make much *fun*
of physicists.

Yes I never should have ventured
to the bar of quashing quaffs,
at the caucus
across
from Windsor,
being adroitly
hoity-toity
in Detroit.

> Take me out to the city square
> and disrobe me of my ranking!

Then, at 1:03 pm,
when I'm *reciting*
my residency,

teaching ESL to women
on a cruise ship near Peru,

scream it *isn't* worth a thing,
that my Spanish is out-of-date,
"Señorita" just as sexist
as my search for bigger breasts,

my poker face exposed,
every treatise that I offer
falling on deafer,
blinder ears.

Ratios

There are 20 quadrillion
ants upon the Earth,
at least that's what the experts
gauge, and there's two-and-a-half
million for every human.

I don't find that comforting,
that there's fifteen fucking zeroes
after twenty,
that I'm somehow
responsible
for 2,500,000 ants,
feel unsure of what to do
with that amount,

and if my neighbour were to die,
do I care for twice as much?

Ants can look after themselves,
you remind me, speaking of their
diligence, the way they stick together,
that their antennae relay messages
much faster than our texts, adding
they could conquer us anytime,
if they really wanted to,
from their colonies around the house,

that they're content
to simply go about their business,
hard-working communists
that they are.

I feel the need to get away,
where I'd forget about the ants,
do some tourist kind of things,
take in New York City in the fall,
breathe the *crisp* of Brooklyn air,
find all the varied places
where *Seinfeld* had been set.

Seated behind your laptop,
you declare there's
over two million *rats*
in NYC, that it's not as bad
as it sounds, say there's *four* of us
for every *one* of them,

that we could saunter
through Central Park,
extol the spectrum
of the leaves,
catch some vintage jazz
in Greenwich Village,

while we wonder if these
vermin know the ratio,
that it actually *falls*
within our favour,
every time they migrate from
the sewers, join us on the subway,
risk our baited traps,

if that bite of smelly pizza's
really worth it—
for them, for us,
and the anxious Italian baker,

who never checks what's crawling
around his feet.

Geography

Yesterday
made its presence
known again—
in the swirl
of a sweaty dream—

the recurring
one I have
to my chagrin—

where I'm late
for the final exam,

haven't even studied,

cutting all the classes
since the fall,

and have forgotten
how to find Room
203, once espied on
Level B.

I still recall the first-
grade *alphabet,*

have the sense to know

that a number which
starts with 2

is likely on the *second*
floor;
that B succeeds an A—
which also implies its place.

But neither math
nor remedial *spelling*
are within the cards
tonight, it's the *subject*
I signed up for

because I *knew*
it was her major,
couldn't bear to be

a half-dozen
drywalls away,

that I'd embarrassed
myself in September,

saying the Washington
of The White House
was in the state of
the same name,
just *above*
the Oregon border,

that it was a case of
New York, New York—
a convenience for the
memory-challenged,

that one of the *perks* of
being President
is the hill-top view
of the ocean (the Pacific,
without the *slime*
of the Potomac River),

gasping at the *sequoias*
being grand
in their cathedral,
the refreshing
mountain air;

and yes, though earthquakes
are more common
in the west, they've shored
up the strength
of the Monument, assured us

Lincoln in his seat
will at no time
suffer cracks,

built with strength and
sturdy, to *outlive*
the rest of us,

like a *college* in the
cloud of fevered
nightmares,

its foggy, mazy
layout which I've clearly
yet to master;

and even if I do,
even if I somehow
manage to grovel
to the Prof,

he'll sneer
at my attempt
to find true love,
say the girl
got a scholarship
to Spain,

many months
ago,

that if I wasn't so
poor in *French,*
I could have at least
been a little closer,

the other *side*
of the great
Pyrenees,

my new phone's GPS
assuring I'll never be
lost again, skiing at
break-neck speeds
across the rocky, midnight
divide

that's been keeping
two *hearts* apart—
each night after
night after night,

when it frankly doesn't
matter where the hell
you think you are.

The Colour of Jazz

The Trane provides me
a view above the asphalt,
and the fault that splits

both bleached and yellow lines.

One-way signs of
demarcation
do not dissuade the cracks,
from their jagged-tooth
borders and thyme,
edging shoulders sleeved
in green.

Camouflaged soldiers
and the leaves of their tea
a jasmine laced with coke.

Teaching the world to sing,
I'll join in ¾ railing
along the byway
to *terminus,*
regardless of Trump-
et melody
and the *solemnity*
of anthemic poems.

You fade,
in ‘67’s
summer fling,
only days before
Detroit, sex and sax
Supreme amid the flames;

Impulsive Blue Notes holding
in the infernal unfurling of flags,
half-massed in the hell of Hanoi,
on cloth too stained by Black
to be revered as
starry White.

Les Communistes

The socialists are gonna kill me.
This isn't literal, or it might be,
it depends how much I've had
of spiced tequila, of Twitter,
of Instagramming crosses, TikTok
Bible paper, their hammer-and-sickle
icon that I slash, refuse to march behind,

when I'm pro-
testing the bull-
dozing of sweat lodges, of animal traps
I don't like *anyway*—only because I can't
stand humidity, while the metal-
mouthed, teeth-clenched, hanger-*on*
of furry limb (that would flee to
liberty if it only could) is innately cruel
and bloody, but then all
my Indigenous brothers need to survive,
and who am *I* to give a Monday sermon,
to the point of unfriending and mute?
And the traps aren't made
like that, you say.

Point taken, and Unist'ot'en
is where my spirit will stand
(if I have one),

which Hitchens would scream
is nonsense—if he were *alive,*
and would his ghost
admit he was *wrong* all along?

I shoved the sacred
tobacco in my glove,
when an Anishinabek elder
offered it to me—on a cold-as-fuck
afternoon, and the tea I had
had failed to do its trick. It was his *idea*
and I'm ever the one to gleefully
acquiesce. The sensation wasn't
as grating as expected—
much less than the Ashes of Wednesday
that kick off Lent, and I cussed each
and every day, after I boasted
I'd give up the booze.
Even the Rector regretted his promise.

But I digress—the Soviet emblem
was nowhere to be seen
and I admire the strength of beauty
on the majestic, Mohawk
standard. Never a mascot—
ever.

Self-flagellants of Dutch descent
say *fearless Joseph? Misunderstood.*
The Pierogi was undercooked
and Stalin's chef, a Bourgeoisie.
If your ravioli-in-a-can
can't Italian, can Crimea
stay Khrushchev's gift?
"The Holodomor is an American
Lie" but Ukrainians aren't Jews
so I'm unable to accuse you
of anything. White-on-white isn't
racism, and bigotry's a pun on words.

I tapped along the way to your exhibit,
on Dundas, 'cause "innovation" is how
it works, and the King is just a block
around the bender. You say it was meant
for *Pride,* that the mofo had in fact
misgendered you, that the poets are
giving *you* a second chance,
even if they barely glance.
Look at them, at the open mic,
how they're crafty
in their beer. My granddad too
wore plaid, but his beard
was bottom-trimmed.

He should've gone electric.
The sons of Cossacks
killed him, y'know.

You told me once
you read my zines,
how collage was just a puzzle
high on glue. The horse-race went to
Paradigm, mine rabbit-slept, gun-
shy.

You're surprised I've grown
my hair, that I didn't
exchange the fedora
for a line of
MAGA hats—
and how could I,
when the orange dotard's Kimchi
is P'yŏngyang-laced?
Elton John was forced to cringe,
when *Rocket Man* was named.
Bernie Sanders
shared the credit

but Taupin wrote the tune—
feel the burn of your mis-
taken.

I'll await your wokened grovel,
the "I'm listening"
alit by torch. Apologies *unaccepted*
by the flash of mob appeal.
And we thought
Frankenstein had it bad.
The flower-girl,
tossed in the pond
head-first, deleted
like a circumcision's
precision *cut.*
The director's lovechild
howls to this day. Even
Solomon would've cupped
his ears. Not David's
son but Ginsberg's muse.
It only goes to *show*
that the straitjacket
was unnecessary. A hairshirt
would've done.

The border guards
are Sergeant Schultz
and the Wall is just a rubble
of Lego blocks,

hidden in the
shags of golden carpet, like landmines
in Vietnam—even the cara-
vans of Juan Guaidó
won't risk it
just-in-socks.

I'll give them my holey
shoes, say *scuffed* is a
sign of affection,
and the boy who blacks them up
is as *blond* as the village-damned.
Look into his eyes—closer.
They're not aglow, you see,
nor Necronomicon demonic.
He's only reflecting sunlight
that shines on the bad
and on the good,
and I wanted to Jesus-quote
to show I'm still a fan of His,
on the days my *in-*
fidelity is frail.

You frothed and foamed
at the jaw
when you read my untimely
interview,

my slandering of academia,
that it's garish bafflegab;
their verse: *spouted*
by Commie demagogues
in cliques. We cold-shouldered
each other for days.

When I creeped your AssFace
profile, yours
was just as phoney
as the rest—
quinoa/greens aplenty,
your pics in obligatory
bikinis—supposedly from
Havana (unless you posed in
Saguenay, had filtered
the beach to hell),

regurgitating gifs and memes
I've seen a thousand times already.
And. putting. a. period.
after. every. fucking. word. does. not.
make. it. profound.
And please, *Full Stop*
is always neither.

You asked me if I checked you out,
your steamy summer selfies.
I say that sex with someone you hate
is the most *exciting* kind of all,
that the feigning of *love*
is a reality deeper

than *all* the secret spaces
of your body—that no, I didn't look,
or if I did, I didn't imagine
us together. We'd tear at
each other's throats
and then pass them off as hickeys.
I have two breasts of my own—
what need have I of yours?
But that's from all the *faggot* jokes
I was forced to hear in school.
Whenever I whipped off
my top, I wondered if it was true.

I'm actually in love with my wife.
As enticing as you think you are,
I'd never take the bait. But never
say never (again): we're bond-
ed by lust and loathing.

When Belle & Sebastian
called it right, that
you want to be left alone
with Marx & Engels for a while,
I should've paused

before sharing the Gospel—
John's, Matthew's,
or from your favourite,
Mao Tse-Tung
(though he'd never confess
the Christ). See, even atheists
bow the knee to some supposed
incarnation. When they placed him
in a state of State,
they should have brushed
his teeth. That's why he never
smiled, I tell you. When we think
we're all the same, then who is
très belle fille?

Not Even If I Was the Last Poet on Earth

This is a pretty
crummy way to say *finis,*

when every lark
and every oak
have passed away,
with the *rest*
of our tired clichés:

The ocean
and its ships.
The mountains
and their snow.
The poems
becoming worse
than even *this*—

when the final
bard on earth
hasn't a rhyme
to go with the times—

waits only for the *red*
and swell of Sol,
a sonnet on the sun
that swallows *every-*
thing in sight:

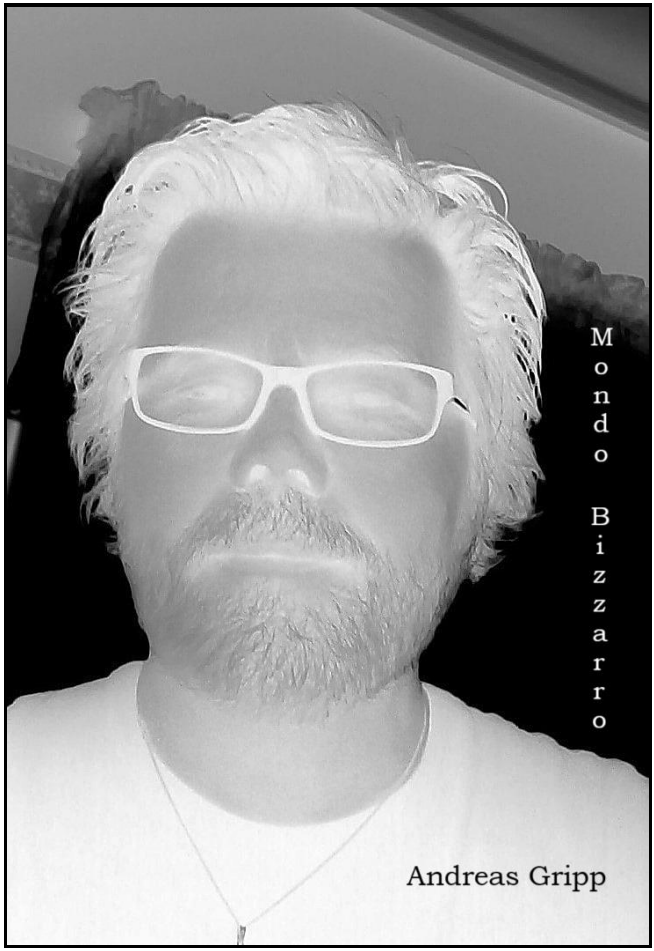
my pen,
this book,
the love I vowed
would *be* forevermore,

blinded by the *flash*
and burn of light, in the blink
before the dark
in which they're one,

when promises are
pitched into the void,
that we've named it
Space
for a reason,

and did you *honestly*
expect a happy ending?
What if I shared my joke
about the chimp
and flugelhorn?

What if it *actually*
made you laugh?
What then?


Mondo Bizzarro
Andreas Gripp

Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario). He presently resides in Essex County with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 30 books of poetry, including *Outré Cantata: Poems Selected and New* (Beliveau Books) and *what a fuck up, what a fighter* (also from Beliveau Books). His poems are firmly grounded in the contemporary experiences of both common and uncommon people.

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